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A HISTORY OF  
THE TRINITARIAN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
WAYLAND, MASSACHUSETTS

This is very interesting and shows great effort was involved in its preparation. There are a few footnotes which I would like to question.

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Final check  
OK

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## INTRODUCTION

In the early 1630's there were only two settlements in North America - Plymouth and Jamestown. These were formed by those who left England for various reasons. Many wanted to break away from the Church of England and others just wanted a new start in life.

The Plymouth settlement was on the coast. However, gradually people moved inland to form Watertown and other towns. In 1638 a group of young men left Sir Richard Saltonstall's settlement at Watertown and established the first settlement in East Sudbury (which is now Wayland).

CHAPTER I  
EARLY MEETING HOUSES AND MINISTERS

The first meeting house, "the Church and Congregation in Sudbury", was erected in 1642 in the center of Sudbury (now the North Cemetery).<sup>SP</sup> The meeting house was for town meetings as well as for church services. At that time the church was Calvinistic in doctrine and Congregational in government. They believed in the doctrines of predestination and salvation only through God's grace and practiced self-government in the church.

The meeting house was a one story, log building, 30 by 20 feet with a thatched roof. It was built by John Rutter for 6 pounds. For 2 years there wasn't any floor or any seats. Meetings were held there for ten years.<sup>1</sup>

The first minister was Rev. Edmund Browne who was not only the pastor of the church but also the leader of the whole community. He was a native of Sudbury, England and came to America in 1637. In recognition of him the settlement was named after his native town in England. He enjoyed the cultural arts and played several musical instruments. He owned 180 books which was considered a large library at that time. He became one of the largest landowners in East Sudbury with 300 acres. He worked with John Eliot to bring Christianity to the Indians.<sup>2</sup> A poem was written about Edmund Browne by a Captain Edward Johnson.

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1. The First Parish, pg. 11.

2. Ibid, pg. 12.

*I do not find this footnote in the B. Biography*

"Both night and day Brown ceaseth not to watch  
 Christ's little flock in pastures fresh them feed,  
 The worrying wolves shall not the weak lambs catch;  
 Well dost thou mind in wilderness their breed.  
 Edmund, thy age is not so great but thou  
 Maist yet behold the Beast brought to her fall,  
 Earth's tottering Kingdome show her legs gin bow,  
 Thou 'mongst Christ's Saints with prayers maist her mawle." 3

In 1652 the second meeting house was constructed on the same spot as the first. This building was 40 by 20 feet with a thatched roof. Edmund Browne continued as its pastor.

The second minister was James Sherman who served the church from 1678-1705. During his pastorate the third meeting house was built (1686) in which was stored the town's powder supply. The first bell was placed in the tower to summon the parishoners to church. Here is a description of the old meeting house written by one of the ladies of the parish.

"There was Body seats below for the oldest people And seats in the gallery for other people. The most popular took the front seats and had Pegs put up to hang their Cockt Hats on. They made quite a show. The deacons read the lines or a verse of the hymn as was the custom of the time, a pitch pipe being used to pitch the tune." 4

The third minister was Israel Loring (1705-1722). In 1722 he became the first minister of the West Precinct Church located in what is now Sudbury Center. The following is from the petition for the establishment of that church.

"Petition of the West Side people of Sudbury  
 to Governor Dudley and the General Assembly"

The Petition of us who are the subscribers living on ye west side of Sudbury great river humbly showeth that whereas ye all wise and overruling providence of ye great God, Lord of Heaven and Earth, who is God blessed forever moore, hath cast our lott to fall on that side of the River by

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3. Marlowe, George Francis, Old New England Churches, pg. 71.  
 4. Ibid, pg. 72.

Reason of the flud of watare, which for a very great part of the yeare doth very much incomode us and often by extremity of water and terrible and violent winds, and a great part of the winter by ice, as it is at this present, so that wee are shut up and cannot come forth, and many times when wee doe attempt to git over our flud, we are forced for to seek our Spiritual good with the price of our lives." 5

Because of this predicament, the West Precinct became known as Sudbury and the other became known as East Sudbury.

The church's fourth minister was William Cook who served from 1722-1760. During his pastorate the third meeting house was taken down (1725) and the fourth one was erected. This was located on the old "Common" (near Marshall's Apothecary) and was a plain weather-stained building with no tower or chimney.

Josiah Bridge, A.M., the fifth minister, served from 1761 to 1801. He was a native of Lexington and had graduated from Harvard College in 1758 with a Master of Arts degree. His service included the period of the Revolutionary War, when he took a more or less prominent part in the counsels of New England clergy. In 1780, Sudbury and East Sudbury split and East Sudbury became what is now known as Wayland.

Nothing of significance is known about Joel Foster, the sixth minister, (1802-1812). However we do know that many people in the congregation did not like to listen to him preach. He knew this so every Sunday morning he would be seen riding out of town as if to exchange pulpits with a neighboring pastor. But when he had ridden a few miles out of town, he would tie his horse up and walk back to Wayland to preach. 6

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5. The First Parish, loc. cit.

6. Ibid., pp. 1-16.

CHAPTER II  
THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN EAST SUDBURY



On May 31, 1813, there was the first mention of erecting a meeting house that would be separate from the town hall. Land was bought from a Mr. Cutler to be used as a common but the church decided to buy land across the brook belonging to a Mr. William Wyman on Nov. 8, 1813. This land was 60 feet off the County Road (Cochituate Road).

On June 1, 1814, there was a "raising bee". It took 254 days to build the church at \$1.25 per day (total cost \$9500). Much of the cost was paid for by the sale of pews. When  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the money was paid, the purchaser received the deed to his pew. The second  $\frac{1}{4}$  was due one year later and the last  $\frac{1}{4}$  was due two years later. On Oct. 24, 1814, a Paul Revere bell weighing 992 pounds was purchased. The tower in which it was placed has been considered one of the most beautiful of its kind.

John Burt Wight was the first minister of the new church and served from 1815-1835. He graduated from Brown University in 1808 and studied at Harvard Divinity school.<sup>1</sup>

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1. "Secession of the Trinitarians from the First Parish in 1828" Early Meeting Houses and Churches, Heard House Papers.

CHAPTER III

SECESSION OF THE TRINITARIANS FROM THE UNITARIANS

As the church membership grew, a sharp contrast between the Unitarians and the Congregationalists became more evident.

The Unitarians believed and still do, that Christ was never of the same substance as the Father although he is still worthy of worship. They also deny the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. They believe that each man must look for the truths of religion in his soul. They don't think that man has to consent to statements of religious beliefs to be earnestly religious. They unite in their attitude toward life rather than succumbing to specific formal beliefs. They depend on reason rather than faith. They believe in the world-wide brotherhood of man, with no discrimination toward race, creed, or nationality. Unitarianism grew out of the efforts of men and women who wished to reform the rigid doctrines of the early New England churches. It came to New England as early as 1710 and by 1750 most of the Congregational ministers around Boston had eliminated the doctrine of the Trinity from the basic Christian beliefs.

In 1778 King's Chapel, the first Anglican church in New England became definitively Unitarian when its rector, with the consent of the congregation, removed from the service all mention of the Trinity.<sup>1</sup>

Many members of the American Unitarian Association, founded in 1825, have come to the conclusion that their movement is not a part of the Christian Church. Ralph Waldo Emerson said "Religious truth is found within man, not in external events or doctrines."<sup>2</sup>

Congregationalists believe in the "recognition of Jesus Christ alone as the Head of the church, and acceptance of the New Testament as the sole foundation of its government."<sup>3</sup> Another basic belief is the making-up of each church by Christian believers who have accepted the church covenant which is a summary of the New Testament teachings. Another main feature is the self-government of each church. The government rests entirely on the members and has no outside authority. By holding church meetings, it chooses its own minister and officers, carries out its business affairs, and plans and executes its own missions.<sup>4</sup>

In 1828, because of these differences in beliefs, there was a theological split in the church.

Josiah Bridge questioned the doctrine of the Trinity, the definition of God, and the quotation of Jesus, "The Lord thy God is one Lord."

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1. "Unitarian Churches", World Book Encyclopedia, XVIII, 24-25.
  2. Ibid, p. 25
  3. "Congregationalism", Grolier Encyclopedia, III, 409.
  4. Ibid, 409-410.

This wasn't the Unitarianism tendencies. Rev. Joel Foster succeeded Rev. Bridge and followed the same tendencies. Rev. John B. Wight was an orthodox Trinitarian. He also became filled with growing liberalism.

However, a few members opposed Rev. Wight. They felt he wasn't preaching the Christian religion. Because of their religious convictions they wanted a doctrine which they considered to follow the teachings of Christ. While the majority supported Rev. Wight, the minority decided to consider forming a new church. By making this decision, they forfeited all participation in ministerial funds and other church salaries.

During the month of March, 1828, three men and nine women asked to be dismissed from the Church of Christ in East Sudbury. Their religious convictions are expressed in the following excerpts from their request for dismissal:

"..... to be fed with the Word that we may grow thereby... such is our view of the importance of the Divine Truth in it's bearings and influence upon the welfare of men..... that we are constrained by a sense of duty to make this request for a dismissal."5

However in April of 1828, the membership had increased to 18. These people met at the home of William Johnson and formed the Evangelical Trinitarian Church: Eunice Rutter, Betsy Allen, Mrs. Samuel (Abigail) Russell, Martha Cutter, Sophia Cutting, Sophia Moore, Elizabeth Colver, Martha Jones, Ellen

5. from the historical archives of the Trinitarian Congregational Church

Schurteff, Martha Jones, Eliza Newell, Ira Draper,  
Ester Johnson, Nancy Rice, Susan Roby, Ruth Willis,  
William Johnson, Edward Rice, and Ebenezer Ames.<sup>6</sup>

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6. Cutting, Alfred Wayland, Old-Time Wayland, p. 20.

CHAPTER IV  
THE TRINITARIAN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH (1828-1922)

The land purchased for the original building of the new church was located diagonally in back of the Christ Church across the County Road. This chapel cost \$700 to build. It was built in April, 1828, and was dedicated on May 21, 1828. When not in use as a church, it was used as a private school during the week. At the dedication of the chapel the church was established under the name of the Evangelical Trinitarian Church and an Ecclesiastical Council was organized. It was made up of Pastors David Kellog of Framingham, Warren Fay of Charlestown, Sewell Harding of Waltham, Samuel Green of Boston, Daniel S. Southmayd of Concord, and Eben Eaton of Framingham.

William Johnson and Edward Rice were elected deacons of the church. They began their services on August 16, 1828.

On Oct. 27, 1834 Ebenezer Ames, Edward Rice, and John M. Sherman formed a committee to solicit the for subscriptions for building the church.

The land purchased for the church was obtained from Samuel Russell in 1835. Additional land was purchased from him because of the need of more room for horse sheds. Another piece of land was purchased for \$125 from John Curtin for the purpose of enlarging the chapel.



When the actual building was constructed, it became necessary to borrow money. In order to get a mortgage, the title had to be cleared. Releases were obtained from all heirs of Samuel Russell without charge except 2. The Congregational Church Building Funds gave a grant of \$2000 without interest and a mortgage of \$4000. \$27,000 was raised.

Edwin B. Goodell of Wayland was the architect.<sup>1</sup>

The first Congregational Church was a nearly square structure with a two-sided roof. It stood with one end facing the County Road (Coch. Rd.) and the other end toward the horse sheds in the back of the building. It had two entrances on the end facing the street. On top of the church was a short square tower. Three large Gothic windows were placed on either side of the church. The vestry stood connected to the church at the rear. To the rear and slightly to the west were horse sheds which surrounded one side and the rear of the lot. Besides the sheds were great elm trees.<sup>2</sup>

On Aug. 16, 1828, the church's first two deacons, William Johnson and Edward Rice were elected. William Johnson died later that year, and Edward Rice served the church for 46 years.<sup>3</sup>

Levi Smith, the church's first pastor, was installed Jan. 21, 1829 and was dismissed Nov. 26, 1832.

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1. Cutting, op. cit., p. 21.
  2. Hudson, Sereno Alfred, The Annals of Sudbury, Wayland, and Maynard, p. 31.
  3. Manual of the Trinitarian Congregational Church, p. 12.

During his service, the congregation grew from 19 to 61 members and four were lost.

Ebenezer Ames, a deacon, was installed Nov. 18, 1829, and served 32 years until his death.<sup>4</sup>

Sabbath (Sunday) School was organized the first Sunday in June, 1828 There were 30 members-- 5 classes and 5 teachers.

In 1830 the first Temperance Society was formed in Wayland (outside of the church). However, out of 30 members that belonged, 29 were connected with the church.<sup>5</sup>

The church's second minister was Lavius Hyde who served from July 22, 1835 to April 15, 1841. Thirty-three members were added and 3 were lost.<sup>6</sup>

At that time, the Sunday School had increased to 135 members and penny collections were held each Sunday.<sup>7</sup>

The church's third pastor, John Wheelock Allen was installed Dec. 29, 1841. During his service, the Articles of Faith was remodelled and the covenant was adopted. He was dismissed on April 16, 1849.<sup>8</sup>

On the 15th anniversary of the church, only one woman of the original membership was still alive and then a member of the church, although three of the women were still alive.<sup>9</sup>

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4. Records of the Evangelical Trinitarian Church of Wayland, Dec. 21, 1841-1849, p. 22.
  5. Semi-Centennial Sermon, p. 22.
  6. Records, loc. cit.
  7. Sermon, loc. cit., p. 16.
  8. Records, loc. cit.
  9. Sermon, loc. cit., p. 7.

The church's fourth minister, Aldin H. Fletcher, was ordained in 1845 and dismissed Jan. 21, 1862. During his service, the church by-laws were adopted (May 27, 1850). In the same year there was a religious awakening in the church and community.

The organ was a memorial gift of \$1000 in memory of Deacon Leadbetter. Other gifts were: \$500 from the Robert Cumming Estate, & \$100 from the William Whittmore Estate. On June 18 1853, the church voted to accept the organ.

Asahel Sherman, the fourth deacon, was elected on April 5, 1859 and he resigned Sept. 19, 1861. In the same year, the Evangelical Religious Society adopted it's constitution and by-laws.

In 1862, the chandeliers and lamps were put in the original church.

The church's fifth minister, Henry Bullard, was ordained Oct. 1, 1863, and dismissed Sept. 1, 1868. 41 members were added and three were lost during that time.<sup>10</sup>

Nine men out of 70 from Wayland, who were in the Civil War came from the church. They were: Edward Carter, William Dexter Draper, Curtis Warren Draper, James Dexter Loker, John Noyes Morse, George Anderson Spofford, Henry Otis Walker, Alpheus Bigelow Wellington, and Walter G. Wellington.<sup>11</sup>

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10. Manual of the Trinitarian Congregational Church, p. 12.

11. Sermon, op. cit., p. 22.

The church's sixth pastor, Ellis R. Drake, was ordained Nov. 18, 1868 and was dismissed Aug. 7, 1871. During that time six members were added.

Rev. Truman Allen Merrill, the seventh pastor, was ordained July 30, 1873 and resigned Jan. 26, 1881. During that time the church "owed no man nothing. What they could not pay for they did not buy."<sup>12</sup> Prayer meetings helped to bind the people together. On July 20, 1874 the church secured the recast which was purchased in 1848. The membership of the church in 1878 was 99- 29 males and 70 females. However 30 were absent, having moved away but not withdrawn from the church, therefore the resident membership was 69.

The people of the church were thankful for what they had so they gave. They gave to Foreign Missions, Education Society, Tract Society and American Missions Society. Up to 1878 the gifts of the church to objects of benevolence amounted to not less than \$8000.

Rev. Robert F. Gordon, the church's eighth minister, was installed on Nov. 21, 1888.

The following minister, Rev. Edgar J. Banks was ordained on Sept. 27, 1892. During his service, in 1896 the church was incorporated under the name of the Trinitarian Congregational Church.<sup>13</sup> In 1901, the average attendance was stated as being 55 persons. At that time funds were solicited for repairs and improvements of the

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12. Ibid.

13. Records, op. cit.

church.

On the night of Sept. 21, 1922 the church and vestry were destroyed by fire. As the story goes a young man got off a the midnight train at Wayland with a group of men. They came to the church and set it on fire. Then the man walked away to his home on Old Connecticut Path. However not enough proof could be collected to convict the man. 14

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14. Carrigan, op. cit., p. 24.

CHAPTER V  
THE TRINITARIAN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH (1922-1965)



there is a ladies Bible Class conducted by Dr. Donald S. Ewing, D.D., minister of the church. On Saturday mornings there is a Men's Breakfast and Bible Class also conducted by Dr. Ewing. Many of the deacons and other leaders of the church attend this class. Also on Saturday morning there is a Senior High Bible Class led by Rev. Robert F. Hoglander, associate minister of the church. Many of the high school people who attend this are leaders of the youth group or Sunday-School teachers. This class gives them a better opportunity to study the Bible closely. For the convenience of the congregation, prayer groups are held Wednesday mornings, Saturday evenings, and Sunday mornings (preceding the first morning church service). These groups are not led by any one person. It is solely for a quiet time with God during the day.

Many opportunities are given to the youth of the church for a greater participation in Christian activities. For the Jr. High age young people there is Junior High Pilgrim Fellowship. This gives them an opportunity to associate with other Christians. It teaches them how to apply their Bible teachings to daily living. There is also a Senior High Pilgrim Fellowship. It has the same purpose as the Jr. High but also stresses witnessing to others about Christ. These fellowship meet every

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Sunday night at the church. Besides these youth groups there are Boys Brigade and Pioneer Girls. These groups back up the missionaries in Japan, Indonesia, Africa, and Hawaii by sending contributions frequently. The Pioneer Girls aid hospitals and nursing homes as service projects.

There are 12 deacons and 12 deaconesses elected on a rotating basis for 3 year terms. They aid the minister greatly by preparing and serving the monthly Communion and by visiting the sick, shut-ins, and the needy.

The ladies of the church have various groups, among which are the Ladies Benevolence Association, the Quarter Century Club, and Women's Fellowship. The latter consists of 5 separate groups: Martha, Mary, and Naomi Circle, Rebecca, Esther, and Deborah Circles.

The Missionary Committee underwrites to help to many people and places. The following is a list of individuals and institutions to which financial support is given through the financial outreach of the church: scholarship fund, a church in Bolton, Mass., Congregational Christian Conference, Walker Mission Home in Newton, Intervarsity, Gordon College, American Bible Society, Christian Service Brigade, Pioneer Girls, Evangelical Association of New England, Barbara Nelson who is totally supported for her work in Indonesia, Rev. Dighton

Doughlin (Congo), Honolulu Christian College, Rev. L. Johnstone, Rev. Lyman Jones (Africa), and Rev. Hans Magnusson (Japan).

Dr. Donald S. Ewing, D.D., is the present minister of the church. He was installed in the fall of 1955. He serves many people in many ways and carries the ministry of the church to the community at large. He is a member of the Executive Committee of the New England Association of Evangelicals. He was a member of the Executive Committee responsible for bringing the Billy Graham Crusade to Boston in Sept. and Oct., 1964. He frequently talks to schools, colleges, and youth groups. He is a member of a committee at Park Street church which is presently working on a possible foundation of an Evening Bible School for laymen. Also, he is a member of the Board of Directors of Scripture Union of Philadelphia which unites and distributes tracts and pamphlets for Sunday School teachers and teacher training. He speaks occasionally in new churches as an interim minister. He gives personal counselling to the members of the church and even to people referred by doctors. He is actively involved in Inter-Varsity work and his sermons are mailed around the country to a large mailing list.

In Oct., 1963, a group of people approached Dr. Ewing to ask if he would aid them in starting a church

in Bolton, Mass. They desired to break ties with another church in the town because they felt that the life in the church was not Bible-based. The church lent its deacons' services and helped them financially. Dr. Bwing served as an interim minister until one was found. The early services were held at the home of the Paul Weatherbees. Finally they received enough money to convert an old barn into a church. The people of Bolton and Wayland pledged their labor, time, supplies, money, and know-how. They worked so hard that on May 17, 1964, the first service was held in the "skelton" of the church. They had to sweep lumber and shavings aside, had to move staging, and set up planks to sit on for the service. A parsonage was purchased adjacent to the new church. The minister, Rev. West, came to Bolton in December, 1964. In Jan., 1965 a service of recognition was held for the minister and the church. This service was attended by representatives of several major Congregational churches in and around Boston to recognize that the minister and the church were a part of the Congregational Christian Fellowship.

As one can see, the Bolton church is paralleling the history of the Wayland Congregational church when it broke away from the Unitarians in 1828. Both the Wayland and the Bolton churches had members with firm

convictions who felt compelled to break away from liberalism and return to the orthodox gospel of the inspired Word of God as found in the Bible.

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